



Westford Hill Distillers, LLC is a family owned and operated craft distiller located in Ashford, CT. **We urge the passage of Committee Bill 5119 that would allow Connecticut farm wineries to market brandy distilled off of their own premises that is distilled from their own fruit. We also emphasize that the bill should be reworded to include all fruit, not just grapes grown in Connecticut.**

Connecticut farm wineries should not be held back from taking advantage of the emerging interest in craft spirits. Local wineries should also be able to efficiently expand their product line to market estate-grown brandies by outsourcing the distillation process. Brandy is strictly identified by the Federal Alcohol Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau as being fermented from the natural sugars of pure fruit then distilled. Hiring a distillery to custom-produce their brandies saves these small winery businesses the expense of adding the equipment and the effort to obtain a Federal Distilled Spirits Plant permit. Expanding the availability of Connecticut brandy is good for our state's craft spirit industry, for expanding tax revenue and for consumers who are seeking quality local spirits.

Established in 1997 by Margaret and Louis Chatey, Westford Hill Distillers operates a spirits manufacturing business on our family's property in Connecticut, and were among the first dozen artisan distilleries in the country. In addition to expanding our own line of craft spirits, Westford Hill Distillers already custom-distills brandies for numerous Connecticut wineries that use these spirits to fortify their wines. We also distill brandy for a large Asian Pear grower in Pennsylvania. Westford Hill Distillers provides a specialty service that can be useful to Connecticut wineries without requiring wineries to become federally permitted and outfitted with distillation equipment.

Craft spirits is a growing segment of the spirits industry—there are now more than 20 craft distilleries in New England, and 450 in the U.S. Westford Hill Distillers launched with a line of spirits distilled from pure fruit on our premises. We've purchased close to a million pounds of fruit to date, most of which is Connecticut-grown fruit from local orchards. Through the years our spirits have been featured in local, statewide and national press, and have won numerous awards. Our New World Aged Apple Brandy, for example, is distilled from all Connecticut-grown apples and aged 12 years in barrel, and was judged to be the best apple brandy in the country last year by the American Distilling Institute at their competition in Kentucky. When our service is readily available to Connecticut wineries to produce their brandies, why should they be required to invest in a distillation operation that isn't their primary business?

No business in Connecticut can afford to miss opportunities to connect with customers. Please consider the change to this bill 5119.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret and Louis Chatey

Owners, Westford Hill Distillers, LLC

February 4, 2015